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(Author Unknown)

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THE life of Saint Rose of Lima was the first from the Americas to be pronounced a saint by the infallible voice of Holy Mother, the Church. Moreover, this charming girl-saint has been declared the Patroness of the New World. Besides the local interest attached to her life, Rose cannot fail to win our admiration and love, uniting, as she does, the intrepid fortitude of a soldier of Jesus Christ with the simplicity and winsomeness of a little child. We know that cowardice never found a place in the heart of this follower of the Crucified. She made no truce with the enemies of salvation, yet, at the same time, she ever retained the guilelessness and meekness of her childhood. So forcibly did this maidenly gentleness impress the poetic mind of Father Faber that he deemed it her most striking characteristic.

However, the life of this child of Saint Dominic should prove interesting to all, for hers was a humble, retired, and even commonplace life, filled with its round of duties and simple joys. In fact, hers was a state of life not unlike that which falls to the lot of many of us unremarkable mortals. Unlike her patroness, the Seraph of Siena, it was not her glory to counsel the Vicar of Christ and to heal the heart-wound in the Church. She was not destined to rule over a mighty people, like the saint-queen, Elizabeth of Hungary. Hers, rather, was the hidden, quiet, silent life of Nazareth. What needful lessons might our proud and frivolous age learn from this humble and prudent American maiden!

Saint Rose was born on April 20, 1586, in the royal city of Lima, Peru. Her parents were Gaspar and Maria de Flores, persons of very respectable lineage, though in rather straitened circumstances, due to reverse of fortune. The infant was not very robust, so she was baptized at home, receiving the name of Isabel, Spanish for Elizabeth. She received this name in honor of her aunt, Isabel Herera, who acted as her godmother. On Pentecost, which the Spaniards poetically style “the Easter of Roses,” the little child was brought to the Church of San Sebastian to receive the solemn rites of the Church. The good priest who baptized her had a few years previously enjoyed the privilege of pouring the regenerating waters of baptism on the head of an infant who was destined by God to be raised to the altars of the Church, and whom we now venerate as Saint Martin de Porres.

How strange the name of Isabel sounds to us who are so familiar with the name of Rose! The beautiful story of this change of name is well worth recounting. One day, when the child was about three months old, her mother and some friends were sitting around the trundle bed of the sleeping babe. The women were gazing in admiration at the child’s marvelous beauty, when a rose was seen to hover in the air above the child’s head and descend to kiss the cheek of the little Saint. The mysterious rose then disappeared as it

had come. There is no need to add that all were astonished and overjoyed at the miracle. Her mother pressed the child of predilection to her bosom and in her joy promised never again to call her except by the poetic name of "Rose."

Years afterwards, when the little girl was being confirmed by another saint, Turibius, Archbishop of the city, he spontaneously gave her the same sweet name, thus manifesting that it was the Divine Will that she should be so named. Aptly, then, does the Church apply to her the words of Holy Writ saying, "Hear me, ye divine offspring, and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters." [1]

As the years passed, this remarkable infant became the general favorite not only among the elder folks, but also among her brothers and sisters and other playmates for, besides being a singularly pretty child, she was endowed with a very winsome way. Moreover, she was never given to selfishness and other petty faults so common among children. All who met her felt an indescribable awe inspired by the presence of this heavenly child.

Even when barely able to walk, little Rose manifested an intense love for Our Divine Lord, and would delight in gazing upon a picture of the Redeemer with His Sacred Head crowned with thorns. It was also her custom to steal away from her games to some hidden corner of the playground to lisp her childish prayers. God, who wished Rose to become a great saint, soon led her along the rugged pathway of suffering. Indeed, she was only three years of age when we find her courageously hiding a severely crushed thumb under her frock and bravely keeping back her tears lest she should startle her rather easily excited mother. Then, when the wound festered and it was necessary to call in a surgeon to remove the nail, the little heroine bore the sharp pain without the least sign of reluctance. We have the testimony of the doctor that in all his years of practice he had never witnessed such heroic disregard for pain.

Shortly after this, the brave little tot was afflicted by a malignant abscess behind her ear. Though the pain was intensified by a mistaken remedy, which caused a grievous inflammation to set in, Rose refrained from groaning or even altering her position in bed, lest she should disturb her tired mother. When the terrible state of the sore was seen through the removal of the bandages, her horrified mother asked her why she had not cried out with pain, but the child merely replied, "Our Lord's Crown of Thorns was much worse."

However, this patient child had her joys as well as sorrows. She enjoyed the tender love of her mother, who, though at times inclined to be irritable, nevertheless loved her daughter ardently. Ten brothers and sisters were given her and she lavished the wealth of

1. Ecclus. xxxix, 17.

her affection upon them. She never wearied of assisting them in their work and delighted in joining them in play, cheerfully yielding her own desires and preferences to please them. She was also much sought after by the children of the neighborhood. In fact, it was while in the company of some girl friends that Rose received the call from on high to give herself unreservedly to the Spouse of all beauty.

One day, when the children were gathered together in the garden, Rose, little child that she was, tried to persuade the girls to take the view that she did in a certain matter. They would not heed her words of admonition and playfully threw some mud and dust at her, much to her annoyance, for she was always scrupulously neat. Her brother, Ferdinand, noticing her momentary vexation, exclaimed in the tones of a preacher, "Rose, a holy girl would not mind a little dirt on her head. She would know that fine hair is all vanity." These words, uttered at random and in jest, struck deep into the heart of the little Saint. Realizing they were the whisperings of the Divine Dove, she forthwith cut off all her beautiful tresses and then and there vowed perpetual virginity to the Bridegroom of her soul. With all truth could this docile child cry out, "My heart is ready, O Lord; my heart is ready !" [2]

Saint Rose now began in earnest to follow in the footsteps of the glorious seraph, Catherine of Siena, whom she had chosen as her model in the following of the Crucified. It seems that the people of Lima had a tender devotion to this great Saint, and Rose had learned of her wonderful life from her elders. Now, some months before the complete conversion, as narrated above, Maria de Flores decided to teach her daughter how to read, but, after a few lessons, she grew impatient and gave up the task. What, then, was her mother's surprise when one day little Rose came running in with a book to where she was seated, read a page of it for her, showed her a sample of her writing, and related how Our Lord Himself had taught her. Then it was that Rose began to read the wonderful life story of the Maid of Siena and to learn how she had attained such intimate union with God. As the child's knowledge of the Sienese Saint became fuller, she wished even more to imitate her ways of holiness. Thus, when the sweet grace of true conversion flooded her heart after the little incident recorded above, Rose, like Catherine, vowed perpetual virginity to God and resolved to spare no pains in modeling her life after Catherine's.

Shortly after Saint Rose had made her secret vow, her family moved to a place just outside Lima, called Guanta, where there were gold mines and mills. Though the location was noted for its beautiful scenery, it seems that the climate was rather damp and cold. Rose was attacked with a rheumatic fever, so severe that she was unable to move

2. Ps. Lvi, 8.

Her limbs. Her mother thought to cure her by wrapping her in heavy furs, and gave her the injunction not to remove them on any account. The cure, however, proved worse than the affliction and caused a general suppuration of the skin. Rose obediently endured this purgatory for four days, when her mother was shocked to find her in such a state, and marveled at the wonderful Job-like patience of her young daughter.

Even from her most tender years, Rose had exhibited self-control in matters of food and drink that was exceptional. She kindly kept her fruits and sweetmeats for her little brothers and sisters. When she was six years of age, she determined further to mortify her appetite by fasting on bread and water three times a week, namely, on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Moreover, she never partook of this frugal repast, if such a name it deserves, until evening, and she made sure that the bread was stale and the water tepid.

Although we do not know when this little heroine made her First Communion, it is certain that she was rather under the age when children were then accustomed to be admitted to the Sacred Banquet. We can better imagine than express what joy must have flooded her heart on that occasion. If we are to judge in the light of subsequent events, it surely must have been like that of Blessed Imelda. Shortly after having received Holy Communion, Rose beheld Our Divine Lord, who told her that He was well pleased with her fasting and that He would henceforward sustain her body as well as soul by the Bread of Life. This noble child then made a vow never to eat meat unless, of course, obliged to do so by obedience. Thus, we see her further following the footsteps of Catherine of Siena.

When Rose's mother heard of the promise her daughter had made of never eating flesh meat, she was naturally surprised, for we must remember that Rose was of a delicate constitution and was almost chronically ailing. Therefore, her anxious mother in all good faith told her child that she must eat what was placed on the table. Rose obediently did so, but immediately her stomach refused to retain the food. Some time afterwards Rose was again taken ill, this time very dangerously so. When she was convalescing, the doctors ordered her to eat some very nourishing meat, so she might more rapidly regain her strength. Our Saint meekly obeyed the prescription, but endured such tortures that, had the command not been recalled, death would undoubtedly have occurred.

"So it is that God," remarks one of her biographers, [3] "when He has marked out for His own all-wise purposes some special road to sanctification for a soul, interferes occasionally Himself in what may seem like trivial matters, to prevent interference on the part of creatures with the carrying out of His design. Whether the strength of a sick girl should or should not be restored by the eating of flesh meat might appear in itself a question not likely to have an important bearing on her future spiritual life. Yet, her

3. Capes, F. M.: Life of Saint Rose, p. 60.

Maker has appointed strict abstinence from this particular food as the path by which Rose is to go to Him. To preserve her obedience to His appointment intact, He thenceforth endows it with unwholesome qualities for her which it has not in its own nature."

When Rose was about fifteen or sixteen years of age her mother made her accompany her in paying visits of a social nature. Rose would have preferred to remain at home, working and praying, but her mother was insistent. She wished her attractive daughter to be a social favorite and, with this end in view, she secured expensive clothes and ornaments for her. Nothing was further from Rose's thoughts, for she never forgot for an instant her youthful vow to our Savior. Therefore, when unable to escape these visits, she made it a point to mortify herself in some hidden way, so she might not be guilty of vanity. Once, when she failed to do this and was putting on a pair of perfumed gloves, they burned her hands with an unseen flame so they had to be quickly torn off. Ever afterward, this saintly maiden performed her secret penances when on these visits of pleasure.

It seems that Maria de Flores was much addicted to paying social visits and that the activity was much in vogue in the city of Lima at that time. Finally, as the visits grew more frequent and protracted, Saint Rose determined to see if she could not put an end to them. Accordingly, she resolved to disfigure her lustrous eyes by rubbing pepper in them. We might imagine how angry her mother was when she found out what Rose had done. When her mother told Rose that her eyesight might have been ruined, the servant of God answered that she would much rather be blind than continue to use her eyes in beholding the vanities of the world! Thus, she succeeded in escaping these displeasing visits with their accompanying fine clothes.

For a while afterwards, our heroine had a little peace and was allowed to dress in the rough apparel of a working-woman. Her mother, however, had not entirely relinquished the idea of securing an advantageous marriage for her beautiful daughter. Therefore, when several offers were made for the hand of Rose, her mother did not fail to urge her to consider them. The issue was deferred for a short time without a positive refusal on the part of our Saint. Then, things were brought to a climax when the mother of a very wealthy young man asked that Rose become her daughter. The whole family looked upon this offer as a blessing from Heaven, for this would relieve their poverty and they could once more assume their proper social position. Rose had now to give a final and resolute refusal. She explained to her parents that she had irrevocably bound herself to Our Lord by a vow of chastity and could never consider an earthly marriage. When they heard this, Rose became the object of insults and even blows, all the more painful to her tender and affectionate heart because they came from those she loved most dearly. She was charged with ingratitude and selfishness. Her brothers and sisters upbraided her with hard-heartedness for failing to assist the family in its straitened circumstances. Verily,

Rose's most powerful enemies were those of her own household. It takes little thought to realize what she must have undergone, torn, as she was, between the natural love for her father and mother and the supernatural love for the Lord of all. Yet, this valiant girl never for a second wavered in her fidelity to her Beloved. Indeed,

"Demons and all the might of hell
Could never take this citadel.
Alone, this gentle, high-born maid
By worldly scorn was undismayed." [4]

We may be sure that the Infant Jesus consoled her in her sorrow and, while she was treated with disgrace, gave her that peace that passes all understanding.

We do not know how long this period of trial lasted, but finally, when her parents saw that her decision was rigidly firm, they ceased persecuting her and permitted her to do as her conscience directed. Thus was settled the question of marriage and never more was she to be afflicted by their demands in this regard.

Rose's life up to this period was not wholly taken up with the struggle to keep her troth with the Child Jesus. She was always busy about the house, helping all that she was able. She was ever ready to assist her brothers and sisters and often succeeded in obtaining from their rather hot-tempered father forgiveness for her siblings' faults. Without preaching, Rose managed to instill in their innocent hearts many a good lesson of goodness and truth. Her mother, whom she loved most dearly and who, despite her many faults, was a good mother, Rose helped in the management of their large household, for the family was never able to have more than one servant. This servant was a very religious woman, named Marianna, who did all she could to encourage the Saint in her endeavors to arrive at perfection. Rose, out of gratitude, lent a willing hand in the menial occupations that fell to the lot of the maid. We can easily imagine a beautiful and inspiring picture of the noble girl cheerfully working side by side with the humble servant. It is a scene upon which we might wish to dwell as it is a scene that is all too rare in this haughty age of ours. Rose, then, was a model girl—humble, obedient in everything that did not intrude between her and her Redeemer, and diligent in all her tasks.

Of these tasks, two especially took up the time of Rose de Flores. She was an expert in needlework and spent many hours embroidering with silks. It was well known in Lima that Rose was so deft with the needle that she could execute in a half hour what any other worker would require an hour to accomplish.

4. From Matin Hymn for Saint Rose's Feast.

Moreover, so exquisite was the art with which she wrought the roses, lilies, and other flowers in her designs that it was whispered that she received the aid of angels. Indeed, in the light of the marvelous gifts vouchsafed from on high to this eager lover of the Crucified, this explanation was the only logical one.

Cultivating flowers in her father's garden was another duty that received Saint Rose's attention. Here, too, the special blessing of Heaven was manifested. Rose's flowers were of the rarest hues and perfumes and always brought the best prices at the flower market. It is even related that her plants often bloomed out of the regular season. Thus, she helped to support the numerous household by her embroideries and bouquets. "It is but a little trade, certainly, but my heavenly Spouse's goodness makes the profits large," are the grateful words of the Saint.

"Why are there so few saints today? There are so few saints today because ours is an age of luxury, of self-seeking—an easy and effeminate age. Penance and mortifications are specters that terrify us." [5] Yet, to the mind of the heroine of Lima, they presented no such aspect. She realized that "a saint must be essentially and necessarily a man or woman of penance" [6]—a victim on the altar of sacrifice. She knew that "self must abdicate if God is to reign." [7] Hence, we have seen how Rose, even from her most tender years, took to heart the words of the Man of Sorrows when He said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." [8]

As the years passed by and Rose approached womanhood, she sought ever more and more to resemble her Divine Lover. Her food was the coarsest and most unpalatable that she could concoct. She added bitter herbs from the garden plot to the rough crust she allowed herself. Moreover, to deaden her sense of taste and to imitate Christ, who was given a draught of vinegar mingled with gall, Saint Rose daily rinsed her mouth with the gall of a sheep. In addition, this holy maid began to wear a hair shirt and to scourge her innocent body with a discipline of heavy-knotted cords. She applied this lash several times in the day in memory of the Second Sorrowful Mystery.

The severest struggle that Rose waged was to overcome sleep. Even as a little child, she was wont to creep out of her downy bed to sleep on the hard, cold floor. Now, as she approached her nineteenth year, she constructed a bed that was as uncomfortable as possible ensuring it would render a minimum amount of sleep. The bed consisted of an old box, in which she placed broken earthenware and gnarled pieces of wood, with a block for a pillow. Thus, by curtailing her sleep Rose found time for her many acts of devotion and service about the house. We must not think that after a long day of toil it

5. Proctor, Fr., O. P.: Introduction to Life of Saint Rose.
6. Ibidem, 7. Ibidem. 8. Luke ix, 23.

was a pleasure for her to rest her weary body on this uninviting couch. It is true that she received great super-natural helps, but these helps perfect nature and do not destroy nature.

Indeed, one night when Rose was tempted to give up her rude resting place and was well-nigh overcome. Our Lord appeared to her and said, "Remember, My child, that I was not content with merely lying on stone and wood. My feet and hands were pierced, and I bore unspeakable sufferings until the very moment when I gave up My spirit. Think of this, My child, when you are inclined to yield."

These penances would seem to be sufficient for even the most devoted ascetic, but Rose found still another way to liken herself to the Redeemer of mankind. We may recall how, as a baby, she was often found gazing with pity on a picture of the thorn-crowned Savior that hung in her mother's room. Her holy ingenuity now devised a way to imitate that ignominious crowning with thorns that Christ suffered. She fashioned a circlet of some pliable metal and studded it with sharp points. Thus, she was kept ever mindful of the pain that the Sacred Head endured for our salvation, and further copied her model, Catherine Benincasa, who preferred a crown of thorns to one of roses. In view, then, of these penitential exercises practiced by the First Flower of America, most appropriate are the words sung by Holy Mother Church in her honor:

"With Christ, the dying Lord of all,
On Calvary's gloomy height she mourns;
She shares His stripes and bitter gall,
And on her brow the piercing thorns." **9**

Saint Rose never doubted her divine call to suffering and mortification. She eagerly responded to the invitation of Holy Writ, "Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning." **10** Although naturally of delicate health, weak in body, and physically feeble, Rose did not shrink from the awful share in Christ's Passion allotted to her. Now, however, she began to hear the further vocation to the religious life. Naturally, her thoughts turned to the Order of the glorious patriarch, Saint Dominic, of whom Dante writes,

"And I speak of him as the laborer,
Whom Christ in His own garden chose to be His helpmate.
Messenger, he seemed, and friend
Fast knit to Christ; and the first love he showed
Was after the first counsel that Christ gave. . . ." **11**

When it was noised abroad that the de Flores' saintly daughter was thinking of joining some religious organization, all the convents in Lima wished to secure such a treasure for

9. From Vesper Hymn of Saint Rose's Feast. 10. Joel ii, 12. 11. Paradiso, xii, 86-69

themselves. At this time, the niece of Saint Turibius, the great Archbishop of the Royal City, was founding a convent of the daughters of Saint Clare and earnestly begged Rose to help her in the foundation. The Augustinian Convent of the Incarnation also eagerly sought for Rose, and it seems that she finally decided to join this holy community. Therefore, she went to the Rosary altar of the Dominican church to bid Our Lady farewell. As she was about to leave the church, she found she was unable to move from the spot, nor could the gigantic efforts of her brother, who had accompanied her, avail. Then, the idea flashed across her mind that this was our Blessed Lady's method of showing her that she was to remain in the world as a Tertiary. No sooner had this devoted client of Mary made this decision than she was released by this mysterious force and permitted to return home. She was then admitted as a novice into the Third Order of Saint Dominic by her confessor, Father Velasquez, in the same Rosary chapel.

Rose was now in her twentieth year. Still, she was destined to be tried more in the fires of temptation. Indeed, Rose herself tells us, "I have bought the habit of our holy Father, Saint Dominic, with so many sighs and tears, with so many fasts and prayers, in order that I may lead a hidden life." She now became a prey to scruples and worries as to the perfection required of her as a Dominican. Her humility was also greatly affected for, whenever she went out of the house, people would stop and point her out as a living saint. Her sensitive soul recoiled at this publicity and made her fear for the purity of her intention.

We understand, then, that when Don Gonzalez de Massa, a wealthy friend of her family, offered to provide a dowry for her if she would enter the Convent of the Carmelites, Rose wavered in her purpose to become a Dominican. We understand, then, that she would have accepted this kind offer had not God, the Light of the World, shown her His Will in a way that could leave no room for doubt. While she humbly prayed for light and guidance, Our Lord deigned to wrap her into ecstasy in the sight of all. Like the Apostle of the Nations, Rose never revealed "the secret words which it is not granted to man to utter," [12] but ever after she never hesitated to continue hidden in the world as a simple Tertiary of Saint Dominic. Without any further hesitation, then, she was professed a member of the Third Order.

Many holy women now began to frequent the home of the de Flores family to find guidance and encouragement in the spiritual life from the words and example of the Saint. Among these pious women was the wife of the wealthy Gonzalez de Massa, who took an almost motherly interest in the young Tertiary. Although Rose enjoyed the spiritual companionship of these good women, she deemed it incompatible with her state

12. 2 Cor. xii, 4.

in life that so much time should be occupied in these visits to her home. Her heart, like the hermits of the Thebaid, longed for solitude that she might uninterruptedly commune with the Maker of the Universe. She realized what Saint Bernard expressed in his memorable words, "O beata solitudo! O sola beatitude!" So, Rose's thoughts turned to a favorite retreat or shrine of her childhood, situated in the garden, where she used to steal away from her companions to offer up her youthful devotions. Why could she not have a similar, though a more substantial, cell erected for herself? Rose determined to ask her mother for the desired hermitage. Maria, however, gave her a decided refusal. Not daunted, Rose had recourse to the Mother of Good Counsel and, having been miraculously confirmed in her determination, she begged her confessor, Father Lorenzana, and the de Massas to obtain the consent of her mother. Without protest, the coveted permission was granted and the little abode that was to be the scene of so many miracles, both of nature and of grace, was soon built in a corner of the garden. It was small indeed, being only five feet long and four in width. When her confessor commented upon its size, Saint Rose gaily responded, "It is large enough for the Beloved of my soul and me."

Here, in this little retreat, Rose was accustomed to spend the entire day, returning to the house only at nightfall. Her whole day was one of ceaseless activity, taken up with her devotions and mortifications, her sewing, and making nosegays of her flowers. After she received the white habit of the Order of Truth, she daily recited the Divine Office. We can but faintly imagine the joy and peace that flooded her soul as she chanted the praises of her Love and meditated on the wonders of God in His saints. What devotion, what eager care and attention, she must have given to this labor of love can be realized only by those who have drunk deep of the waters of eternal life and have, like her, tasted and seen how sweet the Lord is.

Moreover, as a child of Mary, Rose especially loved the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin and recited it daily in honor of the Mother of her Spouse. This beautiful trait must be particularly pleasing to the members of the Third Order, whose daily task it is to render these praises to the Immaculate. Yet, the most wonderful characteristic of the Flower of Christ was her extraordinary application to mental prayer. Her constant recollection, "her deep, earnest, and all but perfect union with God," [13] may be compared to a sweet odor perpetually exhaled by this Rose of surpassing beauty. Her entire life was a seeking of her Last End, a lifting of her heart and mind to God. He was ever-present in her thoughts. He was the constant motive of her every act, and her pure soul never ceased longing for union with Him.

13. Capes, F. M.: L c., p. 15.

We have seen the tender love and confidence that the Saint reposed in the Mother of God, and we are not surprised to find that especially noteworthy was her constancy in reciting the Chaplet of Our Lady. She endeavored also to make others acquainted with this efficacious form of prayer. Another favorite devotion peculiar to this Spouse of the Crucified was the recital of one hundred and fifty Divine Perfections, which were written down for her by her confessor. These she loved to repeat, while meditating on the power and goodness of the bountiful Creator. Saint Rose also weaved spiritual garments for the Christ Child and His ever-blessed Mother. These garments resembled what we today style spiritual bouquets. They consisted of prayers, good works, acts of mortification, strokes of the discipline—all arranged in a definite and suitable order to represent a garment.

Perhaps it may have occurred to the reader that our Saint was more of a Carthusian, living as she did, alone in her little hermitage, than a Dominican, whose duty it is to combine the active with the contemplative life. This objection, however, might be answered by calling to mind that Rose was a model of unflagging industry. We must also remember that God alone knows the innumerable hosts of souls that are saved by those who, hidden in the cloister, constantly pray for the world's salvation. Rose was a Tertiary, not a cenobite, and her love for the conversion of sinners, for whom her Spouse had died, soon found a means for external activity. Her heart instinctively turned to the poor Indian women who were outcast, in direst poverty, diseased, and often still unconverted. Rose therefore asked her mother to allow her the use of some empty rooms in the house so she might bring these unfortunates thither, nurse them, and instruct them in their religious duties. At first, her mother was enraged at the proposition, but Rose pleaded so earnestly for these poor creatures that permission was given. Moreover, this winsome child often succeeded in coaxing her mother to supply her with clothing, bandages, and other necessities. Rose also sought out those families of noble extraction that had suffered a reverse of fortune and were in the greatest need, and who, like the unjust steward, were ashamed to beg. She tactfully attended to their wants without wounding their sensibilities.

Many and astounding were the miraculous powers that Our Lord bestowed upon this apostolic maiden. She had the gift of penetrating the hearts of sinners, and frequently made use of the gift of prophecy to assist her friends when they were in difficulty. Thus, when the de Massas were perplexed over an appointment to a distant city that would necessitate a long separation from the family, Rose assured them that the commission would never really be undertaken. Especially noteworthy was the prophecy that Saint Rose made regarding a convent for Dominican Sisters. She foretold that such a convent would be erected in Lima and dedicated to God under the patronage of her own Saint Catherine. When her mother chided her for making a fool of herself and her family by her idle talk, Rose told her in her own charming, simple way that she would say no more

about it, but added that Maria would live to see the accomplishment of the prophecy, and would, moreover, become a religious within its walls. As we may well imagine, these words did not please her very much, but time proved that Rose was no senseless prattler.

When our Saint was in her twenty-fifth year, a great number of the native Peruvians rebelled against their Spanish conquerors and, withdrawing to the wilds, returned to their former savagery and idolatry. Saint Turibius, the Archbishop of the city, did his utmost to show them the folly of their ways, but in vain. It would seem that the demons of hell were allowed to concentrate their energies to destroy Lima, for a wave of irreligion and crime swept over the city, causing the civil authorities to fear it was a punishment from the Hand of God.

Holy men, inspired by an all-wise Providence, came to preach penance to the wanderers, but their words, replete with the terrors of the awful Judgment, served only to fill the hearts of the transgressors with consternation. Thus, they augmented the confusion and disorder already existing in the erring city.

It was then that Rose, seeing the just demands of an all-merciful God, offered herself as a victim for the unhappy people. Scourging her innocent body until her blood reddened the earth, she prayed unceasingly that the city of her birth might be spared. Her heavenly Spouse was pleased to accept this self-immolation of His beloved, and vouchsafed peace to the afflicted metropolis. The Holy Spirit breathed like a gentle zephyr upon the hearts of the rebellious people, moving them to repent and to return to their former allegiance. Thus, like the Maid of Domremy*, Rose did her part to save her beloved land from the armies of Satan.

"And when the solemn and deep church-bell
Entreats the soul to pray,
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,
The shadows sweep away.

"Down the broad Vale of Tears afar
The spectral camp is fled;
Faith shineth as a morning star,
Our ghastly fears are dead!" [14]

As the earthly life of Saint Rose began to draw to a close, she redoubled her penances. Instead of the knotted cords, two chains were fashioned into a discipline and, in the solitude of her cell, she was able to inflict this form of voluntary punishment upon herself

* "The Maid of Domremy"—that is, Saint Joan of Arc, who was canonized in 1920.
14. Longfellow: "The Beleaguered City."

unmolested. For days at a time, she would partake of no food at all, especially before receiving Holy Communion, for often she was deprived of this Heavenly Bread because she had no one to accompany her to the church and it was an ironbound rule of those times that no young girl should appear in the streets unescorted. Often, as she approached the Holy Table, she was so weak and emaciated that her brother had to assist her to the altar rail. Then, no sooner had she partaken of the Sacred Host than her physical strength was restored. Her countenance was bathed with a super-natural light and glowed with such an exquisitely attractive love that it seemed to those beholding her that she was made a partaker, even while still in this vale of sorrow, of the vision of the Blessed.

When her confessor, at her mother's request, forbade her to use the iron chain as a scourge, our Saint employed it as a girdle around her waist, drawing it tightly and fastening it with a little lock. She then threw the key away, lest she should be tempted to remove it. Moreover, the metal crown that she devised in her girlhood days she deemed insufficient, as the sun of her earthly existence began to set; so she had a triple circlet of silver fashioned for her, with thirty-three sharp spikes—in honor of Our Lord's years on earth—on each metal ring. Thus, her weary head was constantly pained in ninety-nine distinct places. It is distressing for us even to read the vivid descriptions of Rose's bodily macerations as left us by her more detailed biographers. If we are at times tempted to think that she was imprudent in the use of these instruments of penance, let us remember that God was well pleased with these conquests over flesh and blood, undertaken for love of Him and for the souls that He had died to save. The iron girdle was preserved as a relic after the Saint's death and it emitted a heavenly fragrance. Moreover, God granted that three strokes upon this fearful headgear in honor of the Most Holy Trinity would relieve Rose from the assaults of the Evil One.

This true spouse of the Heavenly Bridegroom, in her desire to watch with Our Lord, kept up an incessant battle against sleep. Before her death, she had reduced the hours given to rest to two only. Let us not imagine for a moment that this did not entail an heroic struggle. We saw the bed of pain rather than of repose that she made for her tired body, even as a young girl. That, however, was not sufficient to assist her to victory. Rose battled not only the natural inclination to sleep (increased by the heavy and oppressive climate of the country), but also battled with the wiles of Satan. With hell-defying courage, this intrepid heroine would extend her arms on a large cross (so as to sustain her weight), deal her sleepy head pitiless blows, or, as a last resort, she would fasten the little hair she had left of her once flowing tresses to a large nail that was driven in the wall so, the moment she began to drowse, the pain would awaken her.

Added to these exterior sufferings Rose received from on high a still more soul-searching trial. She experienced all the mental agonies of what is known as the "night of the soul."

It would require the pen of a learned mystic to describe the terrible anguish that the soul of the Saint endured during these trials that extended, at intervals, over a period of fifteen years. During these hours of abandonment, Saint Rose felt all the awful separation from the Eternal Goodness that is experienced by the damned in hell. She felt as though her Redeemer had deserted her forever and as though He actually hated her. Moreover, the enemy of man's salvation afflicted the Saint in every way possible, suggesting temptations to despair and even inflicting physical blows upon her. But, relying upon her Savior and confiding in His glorious Mother, the humble maiden succeeded to vanquish the hosts of perdition.

Our Divine Lord, however, never permits Himself be outdone in generosity. After these afflictions with which He tried Rose's heart, as gold in the fire, He showered upon her manifold graces and blessings. Frequently the Blessed Virgin visited this handmaid of the Lord and helped her in many ways. Saint Catherine, her own special patroness, would spend long hours with her to instruct and guide her in the rugged ascent up Mount Calvary. We are not surprised to hear that her angel-guardian was almost always visible to her and granted her many spiritual favors. Most of all, we love to think of the many times the Divine Child came to cheer this childlike Saint. The Christ Child often spent long hours in conversation with this lily-hearted Rose, encouraging her and assuring her that she would one day be forever united to Him in heaven.

Indeed, like her model saint, Rose, too, was destined to be espoused to the King of Eternal Glory even while in this vale of sorrow. The great day of her mystical betrothal to the God of Heaven and earth was a Palm Sunday a few years before her death. Rose, with the other Tertiaries, was in the Church of Santo Domingo assisting at the solemn services. The sacristan distributed the waving palm branches, but somehow missed Rose. When the procession had formed, the saintly maiden took her usual place and modestly accompanied the others, humbling herself before God and accusing herself of having desired the palm branch too eagerly. When she came before the miraculous statue of the Queen of the Rosary, she begged for pardon. The figure became animated and smiled upon the humble child. Rose, touched to the very depths of her soul by this kindness, cried out, "Nevermore, O dearest Lady, will I take a palm branch from the hands of man, for thou, O Palm of Cades, wilt give me a never-fading one!" The Blessed Virgin then turned to the Child Jesus and asked a favor; then Rose experienced a thrill of holy joy and ecstatic emotion filled her inmost soul, as the Divine Infant spoke to His beloved saying, "Rose of My heart, be thou My spouse!" With a heart over-flowing with love and tender gratitude, and overwhelmed by a realization of the greatness of the favor, and of her own unworthiness, she modestly bowed her head, giving vent in tears of thankfulness to the great joy that came over her, while she promised eternal fidelity to her heavenly Suitor.

Rose had been supernaturally enlightened as to the time of her death. She knew she would never live to see her thirty-second year. When, in her twenty-eighth year, she was taken with what seemed so mortal a sickness that her confessor began to say the prayers for the dying and to urge her to final perseverance, she gently told him not to be alarmed, for her death hour had not yet come. Though the servant of God recovered from the illness, her strength was almost spent. Soon after, she left her chosen cell and the home of her parents to dwell in the house of her friends, the de Massas. Her confessor bade her mitigate the severity of her penances and gave her mother leave to destroy the bed of pain that Rose had used all through these years. In the home of her friends, the Saint chose the smallest attic-room and there continued her prayers and mortifications, though the latter were somewhat softened in their rigor. Rose now obeyed Maria de Massa as her mother, and by her charming holiness taught the children of the family the happiness of virtue.

Toward the end of July in 1617, Rose, feeling that her earthly career was drawing to a close, paid a last visit to her parents and her little retreat in the garden. Finally, her last sufferings set in on the night of July 31. She had retired as well as ever but was found seized with an inexplicable illness that caused her body to become rigid. She appeared like one in the agony of death. Her mother was immediately sent for and, in the morning, her confessor and doctor were summoned. Though there were no signs of physical sickness save those effects mentioned, our Saint described her sufferings when asked to do so by her confessor. She seems to have had a share in the awful tortures that the sensitive body of our Savior experienced while on the Cross. She felt as though the very marrow in her bones was being burned with fire. After a week of this anguish, bodily ailments were added to Rose's agony. A complication of diseases including pneumonia, asthma, gout, rheumatism, and fevers tested the patience of this Job-like maiden. These were the means used by a loving God further to purify the soul of His faithful child. Through it all, she ever showed herself the same patient, edifying sufferer, always thinking of others and confident that God would grant her final victory. Three weeks this terrible malady consumed the emaciated body of our heroine, whose pure soul the while was sustained by a joyous serenity that enabled her to bear the excruciating pains.

On the eve of Saint Bartholomew, she told her folks she was to die that night, begged for her parents' last blessing, took an affectionate leave of her friends, exhorted all to a greater love for God, and humbly begged pardon for her faults and the annoyance that she had caused them by her sickness. At 8 o'clock, she said she would die at midnight, and obtained a final absolution from Father Lorenzana, who had to leave for the choral office. As the appointed hour approached, the dying Saint asked her brother to remove the mattress and pillow, that she might die like her Redeemer on the hard wood. Then, having received a blessed candle and fortified with the Sign of the Cross, the First Flower

of the New World breathed her last. Those at her side caught the last words of this mystic flower as she said, "Jesus, Jesus, be with me!" In death as in life, her one inextinguishable desire was to be united to the Sacred Heart; and so

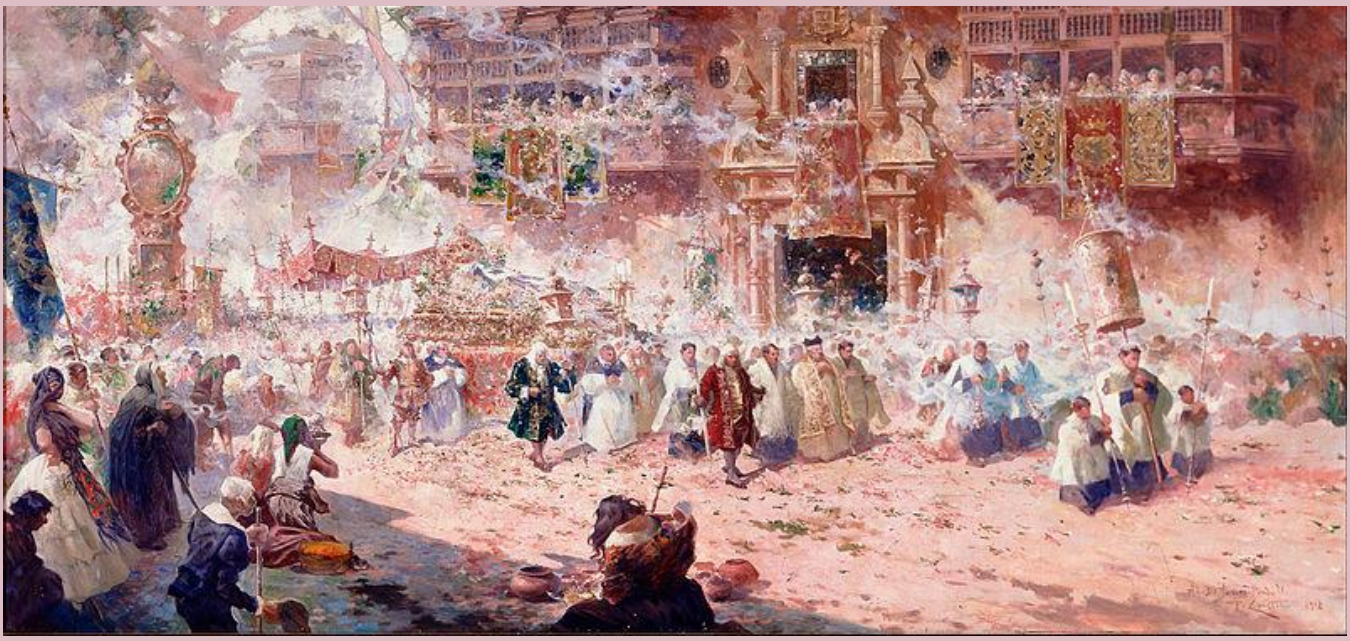
"No longer grieving for her Love,
Joy now o'erflows her faithful heart!
Eternal anthems hymned above,
And pure delight her blessed part." **15**

The news of the Saint's death spread with lightning rapidity. When day dawned, a great throng sought admittance to the house to behold the dead Saint, whose youthful features were restored to the emaciated countenance. Innumerable miracles were granted to those who implored her intercession, and her funeral was rather a triumphal pageant, for no one could feel grief that another saint had been crowned in Heaven. For days, the Friars could not bury the sainted remains because of the ever-increasing crowds that came to see the valiant soul's earthly habitat. Finally, they succeeded in entombing the sacred corpse in the cloister of the convent.

Besides the cures and favors granted through the Saint's intercession, the great change for the better that swept all over Latin America clearly manifested Rose's continued interest in her countrymen. These spiritual showers of roses did not cease as the years lengthened into decades; and so, in 1671, Pope Clement IX announced to the whole of Christendom that Rose de Flores was to be honored as a saint in Heaven, and proclaimed her the special Advocate of the Western Hemisphere. Each year, Holy Mother Church commemorates the victories of this lily-maid on the 30th of August, hailing her with this beautiful antiphon, "O sweet-smelling Rose, scattering everywhere the perfume of virtues, help us to be sharers of the light and fragrance which you enjoy!" **16**

15. From Vesper Hymn of Saint Rose's Feast.

16. Benedictus Antiphon for Saint Rose's Feast.



Funeral of Saint Rose

Oil on canvas painted by Peruvian artist, Teófilo Castillo (1857–1922) in 1918.n nPeruvian artist. 1670 by Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1617 – 1682). The painting is currently located at the Museo de Arte de Lima in Lima, Peru. This is a faithful photographic reproduction of a two-dimensional work of art. The work of art itself and the reproduction are in the public domain *

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